

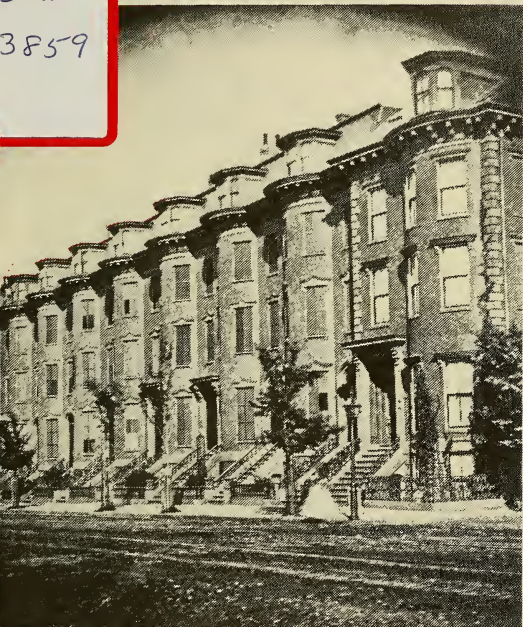
# SOUTH END LANDMARK DISTRICT STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

(REVISED APRIL 27, 1999)

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BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION



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CITY OF BOSTON  
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT  
THOMAS M. MENINO, MAYOR  
ANTHONIA M. POLLAK, DIRECTOR



## INTRODUCTION

The statute creating the Boston Landmarks Commission (chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts) requires Standards and Criteria for each district designated by the commission. These Standards and Criteria serve two purposes: one, to guide property owners in planning the rehabilitation of buildings; and two, to assist the district commission in determining those architectural changes that are appropriate to the district. The Standards and Criteria are not retroactive and apply only to changes proposed after the formal designation of the district. They also may not have anticipated every possible change which may be proposed.

The South End was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 as the largest urban Victorian neighborhood in the country, representing over 300 acres of land which was filled along the necklands and developed during the mid-nineteenth century. Substantially intact, the South End was designated a landmark district in 1983.

A landmark district is any area designated by the commission containing any physical features or improvements or both which are of historical, social, cultural, architectural or aesthetic significance to the city and the commonwealth, the New England region or the nation and cause such area to constitute a distinctive area of the city.

The Standards and Criteria may not have anticipated every possible change which may be proposed. For any property located within the boundaries of the landmark district, the commission must approve all exterior alterations (with the exception of those specific exemptions cited in section O of the Standards; also see Section P for definition of exterior alterations). No building permit may be issued for exterior alterations unless accompanied by a certificate from the commission, and all zoning issues must be legalized before architectural review. If there are any questions regarding the standards and criteria, please contact commission staff for clarification.



Owners contemplating exterior changes to their properties should contact the commission office to file an application for design review. The commission meets once a month in a public hearing to review the applications and issues a certificate of Design Approval when it determines that the proposed work conforms to the Standards and Criteria. In rare instances, such as proven economic hardship, the commission may allow a variance from the Standards and Criteria.

Additional Standards and Criteria for commercial properties and for those within the Protection Area are available from the commission office.

It is generally recommended that deteriorated architectural element meets be repaired with new material which duplicates the old as closely as possible. While alterations that intend to create an earlier appearance than that of the building are discouraged, previous changes to a building have often acquired significance and may warrant preservation.

### SPECIFIC RESIDENTIAL STANDARDS AND CRITERIA SOUTH END LANDMARK DISTRICT

#### A. GENERAL

1. The intent of these standards and criteria is to preserve the physical features, architectural character and appearance of the South End, a cohesive district of 19th-century Victorian red brick rowhouses with various institutional and commercial structures.

The dominant architectural feature of the South End Landmark District is the nineteenth-century rowhouse block. Houses appear relatively uniform in size, material, and style, the individuality of the unit being subordinated to the harmony

of the street. The district is punctuated with occasional buildings of extraordinary architectural form, usually institutional structures such as churches.

2. The standards and criteria are intended to guide the inevitable changes to the exteriors of buildings and physical features within the district to make those changes sensitive to the architectural character of the district and to prevent intrusions. Under these guidelines, no work is required unless initiated by the owner of the property. "Should" as a verb in these guidelines indicates a recommended course of action; "shall" as a verb indicates those actions which are specifically required to preserve and protect significant architectural elements.
3. The most important feature of buildings are the facades that face the public streets and avenues (including all elements of that facade, and the front yard) and the portions of roofs that are visible from public streets and avenues and therefore the only parts subject to review.
4. All proposed changes or alterations to the elements mentioned in No. 3 above will be reviewed unless specifically exempted; preference will be given to alterations that maintain preserve, or restore according to the standards and criteria for elements identified below.
5. Rear wall or side walls unless directly facing a public street or avenue will not be reviewed.
6. When changes to a condominium or other buildings in multiple ownership are proposed, the entire building shall be considered and treated uniformly. Work on any building may, however, proceed in stages.

## **B. ENTRANCES**

### **1. Steps, Stairs**

The original steps, if existing, including stringer, riser, treads, sidewalls, and any decorative element, shall be retained and repaired. If such stairs or steps have deteriorated to the degree that they have been removed or require removal, the replacement must appear like the original in massing and must not change location. Brownstone and granite may be replaced with material of similar texture and color such as concrete. Iron or wood stairs shall be replaced with the original material if possible. Enlargement or replacement of the doorway or window under the stoop may be approved but must be reviewed. (Refer to Sections B.3 and B.4, and section D).

### **2. Railings, Balustrades and Decorative Balconies**

Existing cast iron stair railings, balustrades and decorative balconies shall be retained. If they are badly deteriorated or non-existent, replacement elements must be of a size and massiveness consistent with the remaining original elements of the design or consistent with the size, massing, profile and complexity of remaining examples of iron work on nearby buildings. Simplified adaptations may be allowed if they meet the above criteria. All iron work should be black in color. (See separate Sections G and H on fire escapes and fences.)

### **3. Entryways**

All entryways (including decorative hoods, canopies, surrounds and moldings) shall be retained. If entryways are missing or are badly deteriorated, replacement of elements shall approximate the original design, material, proportion and arrangement.

### **4. Entry Doors and Vestibules**

- a. All original entry doors and visible elements of vestibules shall be retained and repaired. Replacement doors, if required, shall match the original in material and in design including proportion, number of leaves (i.e., single or double doors), placement within doorframe and general arrangement of panels. Single doors replacing double doors will not be approved.
- b. Transoms, sidelights, and other features shall be retained and repaired and may not be removed or blocked down to fit smaller doors and frames.

- c. Gates or grilles directly outside or in place of main doors may be allowed and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

## **C. EXTERIOR WALLS**

1. **Masonry (brick, stone and concrete) (See also Section D.2)**
  - a. Existing historically appropriate walls shall be retained and repaired.
  - b. Painting of any masonry surface will be considered for approval only if the masonry is extremely damaged or the surface is already painted. The proposed color must approximate the original masonry in appearance.
  - c. Repointing shall match the original mortar in color, texture, joint width and profile.
  - d. Sand blasting (wet or dry) will not be approved on any masonry or wood surface.
  - e. Brick (appearing mottled, grayish or whitish, etc.) will not be approved for additional masonry work. Brick shall match original existing brick as close as possible.
  - f. Brownstone may require special treatments involving replacement materials and coatings; each situation will be considered individually based on condition of existing material and proposed situations. The replacement material must approximate brownstone in appearance and texture; the color may be matched by painting or staining.
  - g. Covering masonry in another material will not be approved.
  - h. New openings in the wall are discouraged but may be approved on a case by case basis.
  - i. Original brick chimneys (and chimney caps and pots) should be retained.

2. **Wood**

Retention and repair of existing walls is preferred. Approval of synthetic siding may be considered provided the original trim and proportions and the arrangement of trim and other elements are not altered or removed. The design and proportion of the synthetic siding should faithfully duplicate the original material, and no grained-surface or vertical siding will be allowed. New openings in wooden facades are discouraged, but may be allowed on a case by case basis. Painting wood trim is exempt from commission review. (See Exemption #1 in Section O.)

## **D. WINDOWS, WINDOW OPENINGS AND TRIM**

The original window design and arrangement of window openings on all facades within the Commission's jurisdiction shall be retained. Changing window openings to accommodate larger or smaller sash and frame will not be approved. Restoring window openings to the original size where original elements are still visible is encouraged. New openings shall not be allowed.

### **1. Repair vs. Replacement**

- a. The Commission maintains that original or historically correct wood windows should be repaired rather than replaced. The slender dimensions of sash frame, the economy and efficiency of original pulley systems, and the tested longevity of the original wood window systems point toward the long-term benefits of retaining original materials. In most cases, the commission has found that the original windows can be repaired, and at a more economical rate than full window replacement. Additionally, the repair of the original windows can be done much more easily than the repair of a new replacement window. Commission staff shall be contacted about repairing original wood windows before any replacement window application is submitted.
- b. If it has been shown that the original windows, or older wood windows with historic proportions, must be replaced, they shall be replaced with wood windows that meet the commission's policy for window replacement. The commission views these historically correct wood windows as an integral part of the rowhouse design, and therefore of the district. The further loss of original and/or historically correct wood windows in the district is not acceptable.
- c. Several properties within the district have already lost their original or historically correct wood windows. They have been replaced with either



aluminum window units or inappropriately designed, poorly constructed and installed wood window units. The commission strongly encourages the replacement of these units with wood windows that meet the Standards for window replacement. However, since the original resource has already been lost, and an inappropriate window unit has been since installed, the commission will allow the installation of aluminum replacement window units that meet the Standards and Criteria for window replacement.

- d. In cases of economic hardship, the commission will *consider* the replacement of original or historically appropriate wood windows (straight sash) with aluminum window units. Please contact commission staff to receive more information on economic hardship applications.
- e. In no instance will the commission allow the replacement of original curved sash with curved or straight sash aluminum window units, or straight sash wood units. nor will aluminum replacement sash be allowed in adjacent window openings where curved sash has been retained.
- f. In certain cases, where the applicant has documented that the existing appropriate or original wood windows must be replaced and where the building is viewed by the commission to be of a style warranting additional consideration, the installation of aluminum windows may be considered. This determination is made on a case-by-case basis, and in general excludes the typical South End rowhouse so prevalent in the district.

## **2. Policies for Window Replacement**

Early consultation with commission staff is strongly encouraged, and will result in a speedier review process. The following policy statement is intended to provide guidance to applicants: all proposals for window replacement will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Applicants shall obtain the window replacement application from commission offices.

- a. Wood replacement windows are allowed. Both single glazed and thermally insulated windows will be considered, based on their exact dimensions as they will appear installed. The commission will review replacement window specifications with consideration to their approximation of original window dimensions. Specifically, the commission will not allow a significant reduction in original glazed openings either by increased framing or wide sash and muntin dimensions.
- b. Only structural (true) muntins or exterior applied muntins which are integral with the sash frame will be considered; simulated muntins inserted between the panes of glass or exterior snap-in muntins are not allowed. Muntins must replicate the original muntin dimension and profile, or have a raised trapezoidal profile. Their configuration must replicate the original pattern, based on documentary evidence.
- c. The commission will require the use of dark colored jamb-liners, the use of anodized spacer bars between thermal panes, and the replication of brick mold dimensions and profile.
- d. The approval of appropriate aluminum windows (see Section C. 1, part c above) is based on the framing dimensions matching that of wood and the use of a dark non-reflective metal. The use of an integral muntin measuring no more than 7/8 inch in dimension will be required; simulated muntins inserted between the panes of glass or interior muntins are not allowed. Muntins must have a raised trapezoidal profile and their configuration must replicate the original pattern based on historical documentation. The commission will require the use of wood brick mold painted the same color as the metal sash and will only allow the panning of the original wood sill where absolutely necessary. The commission will require the use of dark jamb liners and the use of anodized spacer bars between thermal panes. Finish shall be of black anodized or enamelized paint in a color approved by the commission.
- e. Vinyl or vinyl-clad windows will not be allowed.

- f. Only half-window screen with dark screening and painted frames and tracks are allowed.
  - g. The commission will require the full replacement of any windows which are installed without a certificate of Design Approval or which do not meet the specifications of a certificate of Design Approval.
3. Sills and Lintels (See also Section C. 1) Window sills and lintels shall be retained and repaired. If severely deteriorated, replacements shall be of a material, arrangement, color and proportion similar to the original in appearance. Replacement sills in brick will not be approved. Decorative lintel details such as applied or incised designs should be retained.
  4. Window Grilles and Iron Balconies (See also Section B.2) Ornamental or highly decorative grilles and balconies may be allowed and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. (See Exemption #10 in Section O.)
- E. BAYS, ORIELS AND PROTRUSIONS FROM WALL**
- Bays, oriels, and other similar protrusions from the exterior wall may not be removed. If altered, the design shall approximate the original; new synthetic covering materials will not be approved.
- F. ROOFS (including rooflines, cornices and dormers, skylights, greenhouses, arbors, penthouses, roof fences and decks, mechanical penthouses, solar panels, and devices, and the like)**
1. The original roof configuration and cornice line shall be retained. Additional floors visible from the public streets and avenues may be permissible in special circumstances provided the addition does not interrupt a contiguous row of even cornice lines. Raising or lowering the existing roofline will only be allowed for the purpose of restoring the roof to its original profile. Alterations or new construction such as greenhouses, penthouses, arbors or trellises, solar panels and devices, mechanical and electrical equipment, if visible from a public street or avenue, may be approved only on a case-by-case basis but in general are discouraged.

Approval criteria shall be:

- a. placement to minimize visibility,
  - b. minimizing visible mass,
  - c. non-reflective dark appearance, and
  - d. conformance to State Building Code Requirement.
2. Roof decks, including decking and railing, should not be visible from any public way. Partial visibility of the railing may be allowed on a case-by-case basis based on criteria listed in #1 above. Any visible railings must be black metal.
  3. Skylights are never allowed on mansard roofs. Visible skylights on other roofs are discouraged, unless original to the building, but may be approved, provided that the projection is less than one foot above the roof and at least one foot back from the visible edges of the roof; framing of the skylights should also be dark and non-reflective.
  4. Original dormers on roofs shall be retained and repaired or restored. Expansion of existing dormers or adding new dormers may be approved on a case-by-case basis provided designs are based on historic models.
  5. Wood, masonry, and metal cornice elements shall be retained and repaired or restored.
  6. Original slate should be retained or repaired. If the visible portion of the roof requires replacement, slate or a non-reflective material similar in color and texture to slate may be allowed.
  7. Gutters, downspouts, flashing, whether new or replacement, must be of a dark, non-reflective material and non-obtrusive in appearance; unfinished metal (other than copper) will not be approved.

## **G. FENCES AND YARDS**

### **1. Fences (Refer to Section B.2)**

Original front yard fences shall be maintained and repaired or restored. If completely deteriorated or non-existent, replacement by a copy is preferred; an appropriate contemporary design may be acceptable. Gates and chainlink, concrete block, light gauge metal, and wooden picket or lattice fences are inappropriate for front yards.

### **2. Front Yards**

- a. Excavation of front yards below existing grade of front yard will not be approved except for small areaways to accommodate existing windows, ventilation, or for drainage purposes.
- b. Covering of front yards with concrete, asphalt, or similar materials will not be approved. Planting is encouraged.
- c. Construction of storefronts or other ground level projections in the front yard will not be approved.
- d. Excavation for auxiliary entrances may be allowed provided they are based on historic models. They will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- e. Placement of any sort of utility/mechanical equipment will not be allowed in the front yard. (Refer to Section N.)

## **H. FIRE ESCAPES**

New fire escapes on street facades of buildings will be permitted only when required for safety and an alternative egress route is clearly not possible. Fixed diagonal stairways are discouraged. (See Section B.2 for decorative balconies.)

## **I, J & L SIGNS AND COMMERCIAL FRONTS**

As noted in the Introduction, these Standards and Criteria are available from the commission office.

## **K. DEMOLITION**

Demolition of entire structures is prohibited except when in the opinion of the commission warranted for extraordinary circumstances. Partial demolition of later additions (such as storefronts) is subject to review on a case-by-case basis.

## **M. ADDITIONS**

Architectural changes that increase the height above existing contextual rooflines, or that substantially alter the profile of the building, will not be allowed unless they are based on documented historical models. Alterations to atypical buildings may be allowed on a case-by-case basis.

## **N. UTILITY/MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT**

1. Mechanical Equipment, such as compressor units, should not be visible from any public way within the district. Such equipment should be located either on the roof of the building, in a non-visible location, or at the rear of the building. Front yard placement is not appropriate.
2. Vents are most appropriately located on the uppermost roof in an inconspicuous area. Wall penetration for vents is inappropriate on street-facing facades.
3. Satellite dishes and Antennas shall be located on the roof, as close to the center as possible so as to be invisible from the street.
4. Communication and Service Equipment, including telephone electrical, cable television wiring or other utility equipment should not be installed on a street-facing facade on any building within the district. All wiring and equipment should be black.
5. The location of visible and audible fire alarms must be reviewed by the Commission.

## **O. EXEMPTIONS FROM REVIEW**

These items are not subject to the review and approval of the District Commission, the following comments are, however, recommended. The commission staff can provide additional information to interested individuals who request it.

1. **COLOR (WOOD):** It is encouraged that wood trim and window sash and frames



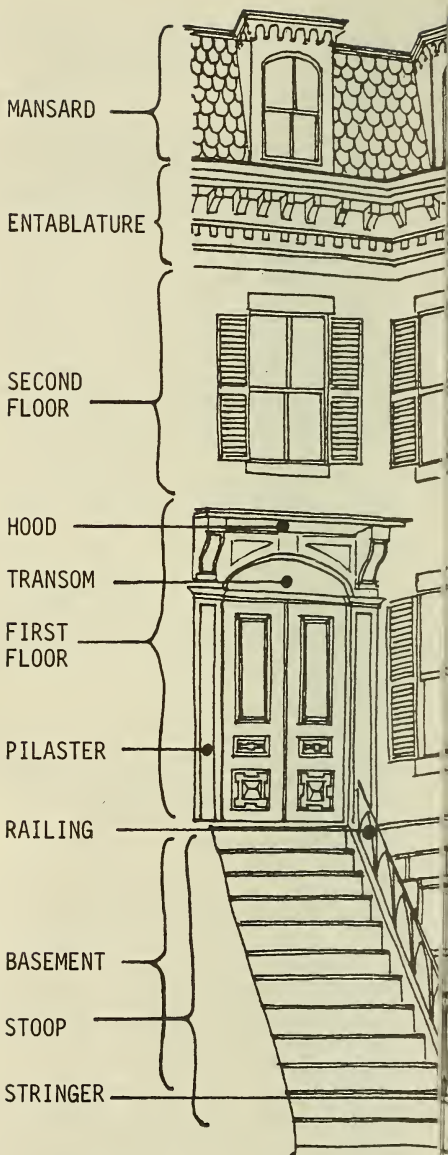
be painted in muted dark tones on Victorian-era structures. Lighter tones are appropriate for the few pre-Victorian and Classical Revival buildings.

2. **SHUTTERS:** When used, shutters should be of a wood louver design. Each shutter should match the height and one-half the width of the window opening. It is recommended that the shutters be installed on shutter hardware and be operable or made to appear operable. Shutters should also be black or dark in color.
3. **INTERCOM/BUZZER DEVICES:** Buzzers and intercom boxes should be inside the vestibule and not mounted onto the brick face of the building. Individualized buzzers are more appropriate than metal panels.
4. **TEMPORARY SIGNS:** Such signs should be installed so that their removal will not scar the face of a building or fence. Temporary signs should also not obscure significant architectural details.
5. **AIR CONDITIONERS:** Portable, seasonal window air conditioners are exempt from review.
6. **EXTERIOR LIGHTING:** It is encouraged but not required that vestibules and doorways be illuminated. Lighting on the facade was not a part of 19th-century South End rowhouse design. Exterior lighting should be generally concealed (e.g., recessed over doors) and should not imitate earlier 18th-century styles (i.e., colonial lanterns). Simple contemporary fixtures are a suitable alternative.
7. **DOOR HARDWARE:** Existing original door hardware should be retained wherever possible. New replacement hardware should replicate the original or be of a simple contemporary design.
8. **STORM WINDOWS:** Installation of storm windows is allowed. The color of storm windows should closely match the trim to which they are affixed. Storm windows should have a narrow frame that does not protrude beyond the facade plane of the building. Storm sash should closely align with the window sash, particularly the meeting rail. Natural aluminum is not allowed.
9. **AWNINGS:** Fixed or retractable awnings are allowed at window openings provided they fit accurately within the masonry opening and are of a material and design appropriate to the building. Canvas or canvas-looking material is encouraged. Metal or vinyl awnings are not allowed.
10. **GRATES:** Window and secondary door grates are allowed provided the ironwork is mounted within the masonry reveal of the window or door opening. The design should be consistent with that of the building. Re-use of period grilles and designs is encouraged.
11. **BULLETIN BOARDS AND DISPLAY BOXES:** Permanently affixed bulletin boards and display boxes are allowed and if installed may be included in the calculation of allowed signage. Exterior walls may not be used as display or bulletin boards.
12. **SECURITY SYSTEMS:** Devices integral to security systems, such as alarm boxes or sirens, should be concealed from view and colored to blend or camouflage with their surroundings.

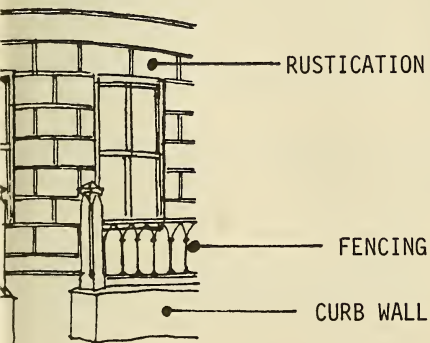
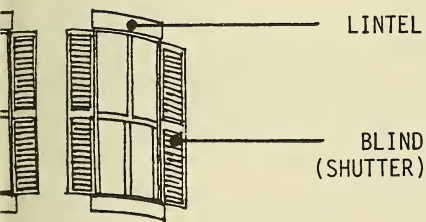
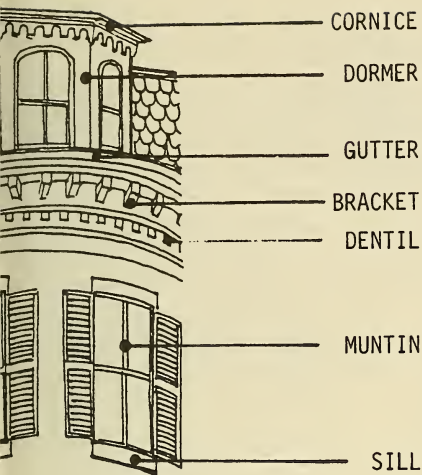
## **P. GLOSSARY**

1. **Exterior Alterations:** Any repair, reconstruction, restoration, replacement, rehabilitation, alteration, demolition, addition, or new construction proposed for the exterior of a building, and including the front yard. this work may involve changes in materials, dimensions, design, configuration, texture, color, or visual appearance (and includes masonry cleaning, repointing, repair and painting).
2. **Maintenance and Repair:** Any work which will involve no change in materials, dimensions, design, configuration, color, texture or visual appearance.
3. **Shall:** Shall as a verb in these guidelines indicates those actions which are specifically required to preserve and protect significant architectural elements.
4. **Should:** Should as a verb in these guidelines indicates a recommended course of action.

**For applications and additional information call the staff at 635-3850.**



TYPICAL SOUTH END AIR





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